

AN ERROR ANALYSIS ON THE SURFACE STRATEGY IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT WRITING MADE BY THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP N 1 MOJOLABAN

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Abstract: Indonesian students as foreign language learners still have difficulties in learning English, especially in delivering ideas in a written form. They need to consider about the grammatical components of English that differ from Indonesian language. This article describes errors based on surface strategy made by the students in writing a descriptive text. Thirty two students from the eighth grade of SMP N 1 Mojolaban were asked to write a descriptive text about their family. All students writing are, then, analyzed, in order to investigate students' errors and their causes. Based on the surface strategy, it can be concluded that the students have difficulties in omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Most of students tend to make errors of omission.

Keywords: error analysis, surface strategy, descriptive text writing

Writing can be used as the representation of our mind to communicate with someone else. Byrne (1997: 1) states that writing is the act of forming symbols, letter or combination of letters, which relate to the sound when we speak, arranged according to certain conventions to form words and words arranged to form sentences. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and text.

Hartog (1986: 24) states that there are four aims of writing (a) to express the thought, (b) to explore and elaborate these thought, (c) to develop their thinking to convey to the other people the result of their thinking, (d) to convey to the other people the result of their thinking as clearly and completely as possible. Conveying experience and knowledge can be written down in written form. It can be proved that there are errors to rise up even in choosing

comfortable words, grammar and so on which are related to writing.

Errors in foreign language teaching especially in English are the cases which are difficult enough to avoid. Learners produce errors because they have not understood the target language system. Richards (1985: 96) states that error analysis is the study of errors made by the second and foreign language learners. Supporting his idea, Brown states that error analysis as the processes to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second language and then to reveal the systems operated by learner (1980: 166).

In order to have proper analysis of the students' language, it needed to differentiate between errors and mistakes. Richards states that an error is a term to refer to the systematic errors of the learner from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date. Meanwhile, mistake is made by learners

when they are writing or speaking. It is random performance slip caused by fatigue, excitement, tiredness, etc., and therefore can be readily self corrected (Corder in Freeman and Long, 1991: 59).

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982: 146), there are four types of error: linguistic category, surface strategy, comparative taxonomy, and communicative effect taxonomy. In this study, the researcher carried out a research to (1) find out the types of errors on the surface strategy in descriptive text writing, (2) to find out the percentage of errors on the surface strategy in descriptive text writing,

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in the study is descriptive method. It is a procedure of research by describing the condition of the objects of the study of present moment based on appearing facts (Nawawi, 1996: 73). The data found by the researcher, then, must be processed and interpret to the readers. Thus, the aim of the study is trying to describe and present the data from the students' error in writing a descriptive text. In this research, the researcher took 32 students of the second grade as the sample.

In this study, the researcher used a test as the instrument to collect the data. The test type which was used in assessing students' writing is essay test. It is used for knowing students' competence in writing a descriptive test. The researcher conducted a research by giving students a writing test in class and they were asked to write about their own text based on the theme. Before administering the test, the writer tried out the test to find the readability of the instruction. The writer measured readability of the instruction by asking some members of population who were not sample to justify whether or not the instruction is clear, easily understood, and at their level. The result is

and (3) to find out the causes of errors made by students in descriptive text writing.

The procedure of error analysis proposed by Corder in Ellis (1994) 48) includes collecting the data, identifying students' errors, classifying errors, explaining errors, and the last is evaluating errors. The data were collected from the students writing on descriptive text. Then, the researcher identified students' error. In classifying errors, the researcher used surface strategy taxonomy which consists of: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering

the instruction is readable. To collect the data of sources of errors, the writer used an interview as instrument for collecting the data. The interview was done to find the reasons why the students made errors.

The data collected were analyzed by using descriptive statistic method. Walpole (1995: 2) says that this method gives the information about the data. The data are then processed based on the procedure of error analysis. After collecting the data, the researcher identified the errors from the students' work and then classified based on surface strategy, explained errors by establishing the sources of errors, and evaluated error.

The frequency of errors found in the student work is obtained from the number of errors which is divided by the total number of errors times 100%.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the research, the writer got the data presenting the students' error in some components. The percentage of errors in each type is shown in the following table:

Table 1: The Percentage of Each Type of Errors

No	Type of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors (%)
1.	Omission	161	37.44
2.	Addition	97	22.56
3.	Misformation	155	36.05
4.	Misordering	17	3.95
Total		430	100

The table above shows that there are four types of students' error identified from surface strategy, namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. It can be seen that omission error is the highest percentage (161 or 37.44% of 430 total errors) and it is followed by misformation error (155 or 36.05% of 430 total errors), addition error (97 or 22.56% of 430 total errors), and the last is

misordering error (17 or 3.95% of 430 total errors).

Omission Error

Errors of omission are related to the absence of an item in a well formed utterance. Based on the data, this error occurs when a sentence loses a part of word or more. The distribution of errors in omission is presented on the table below:

Table 2: The Distribution of Omission Errors

No.	Sub-type of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Omission of article	24	5.58
2.	Omission of head noun	15	3.49
3.	Omission of possessive	20	4.65
4.	Omission of plural form	14	3.25
5.	Omission of letter	43	10
6.	Omission of auxiliary (to be)	10	2.36
7.	Omission of word	25	5.81
8.	Omission of modifier	2	0.46
9.	Omission of punctuation	5	1.16
10.	Omission of preposition	1	0.23
11.	Omission of regularization	2	0.46
Total		161	37.45

From the table 2, it can be seen that the highest number of omission error is omission error of letter with 43 errors or 10% of the total numbers of errors. The lowest omission error is omission error of preposition, that is 1 or 0.23% of the total errors. The following sentence is one of students' errors in omission:

**I have two family ____ (Ss 12)*

The sentence above shows that the student omitted the head of noun phrase. Actually the noun phrase consists of head and modifier. In that sentence the student just wrote the modifier of noun phrase. If we read carefully the sentence is not well-

formed. The revision of sentence above is *I have two family members.*

Addition Error

Addition is opposite of omission. This error takes place when an item or more

should not present in well-formed utterances. The distribution of errors can be seen in the following table:

Table 3: The Distribution of Addition Errors

No.	Sub-type of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Addition of plural form	20	4.65
2.	Addition of preposition	11	2.56
3.	Addition of auxiliary (to be)	19	4.42
4.	Addition of article	7	1.63
5.	Addition of auxiliary verb (has,	4	0.93
6.	Addition of letter	22	5.22
7.	Addition of pronoun	3	0.70
8.	Addition of noun	5	1.16
9.	Addition of conjunction	3	0.70
10.	Addition of modal auxiliary	2	0.46
11.	Addition of possessive case	1	0.23
Total		97	22.56

From the table 3 above, it can be seen that the highest percentage of addition errors is in the addition errors of letter. Same with the omission errors, this error exists because the students do not careful when composing their own word. The example of students' errors in addition can be seen in the sentence:

* *My mother is a beautiful woman and she is diligent woman....*(Ss 31)

The sentence is incorrect because the student uses double nouns in one sentence. Here, the

student also added pronoun which should not appear in his compound sentence. The correct sentence should be *My mother is a beautiful and diligent woman.*

Misformation Error

A misformation error uses incorrect form of a morpheme in a structure. This error makes the sentence ungrammatical. The distribution of misformation error can be seen in the following table:

Table 4: The Distribution of Misformation Errors

No.	Subtypes of Error	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Misformation of <i>to be</i> auxiliary	13	3.02
2.	Misformation of noun	17	3.95
3.	Misformation of verb	10	2.36
4.	Misformation of auxiliary verb (have,has)	17	3.95
5.	Misformation of adjective	14	3.26
6.	Misformation of letter (misspelling)	25	5.81
7.	Misformation of subject pronoun	15	3.49
8.	Misformation of possessive	3	0.70
9.	Misformation of preposition	12	2.79
10.	Misformation of phrases	11	2.56
11.	Misformation of conjunction	11	2.56
12.	Misformation of word	7	1.63
Total		155	36.08

The table above indicates that there are 25 errors or 5.81% of total errors in misformation of letter. It means that the highest number of misformation error is misformation error of letter/misspelling. The error of misspelling happened when the students did not know the correct spelling. The following example as the sample of misformation error:

* *My position in my family is a children.* (Ss 21)

The placement of noun “*children*” makes that sentence incorrect. Here, the student used the plural form of the noun “*child*”. The students usually used the same form to

show something whether singular or plural. Because of that, they did not know the correct form of the noun that they wrote. The correct form of the sentence above is “*My position in my family is a child.*”

Misordering Error

Misordering error is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group morphemes in an utterance. Here, the researcher classified students’ error in misordering into four subtypes of errors. Table 5 shows the distribution of misordering errors:

Table 5: The Distribution of Misordering Error

No.	Subtypes of Error	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Misordering of head noun	12	2.79
2.	Misordering of to be	3	0.70
3.	Misordering of possessive	1	0.23
4.	Misordering of adverb	1	0.23
Total		17	3.95

From the table above, the writer concluded that the highest percentage of misordering errors is the misordering error of head noun; there are 12 or 2.79% of 430 total errors. The students tended to make many errors in misordering of head noun because they did not understand the structure of the head and modifier of noun phrase. For example in the sentence:

**I have family harmonious*

From that sentence the writer knows that the students lacked of knowledge in constructing a noun phrase. They confused to put the head and modifier of a noun phrase correctly; therefore they write their incorrect sentence. Thus, the correct sentence is “*I have harmonious family.*”

After classifying the errors based on error types, the writer explained the errors based on sources of error. In this case, she used the data are taken from interview. The interview used to find the reasons why

the students made the errors. From the result of the interview, the writer found that there are some factors causes of errors, namely: (1) Interlingual transfer which is caused by the interference of their mother tongue with 96 errors or 22.32% of all errors, (2) Intralingual transfer which is a negative transfer within the target of language (English) with 331 errors or 76.98% of all errors, and (3) the context of learning that deals with the teacher and the material of teaching and learning process with 3 errors or 0.7% of all errors. Based on the data, intralingual transfer were the most common sources which caused errors.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research finding, the researcher found some data which showed that errors in constructing descriptive text were still performed by eighth grade students of SMP N 1 Mojolaban. From 32 worksheets which were sample of this

research, many students of the study still made errors in constructing a written descriptive text. In this research, the writer analyzed the data by using surface strategy, consists of: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The result of the study proved that the omission error of letter as the most error which often happened in this study. It was possibly caused by carelessness of the students. The carelessness was often closely related to lack of motivation.

Motivation, according to Elliot (2000:332), is defined as an internal state that arouses us to action, pushes us in particular directions, and keeps us engaged in certain activities. Motivation to write is one's activation to give more effort to writing activity. The students must have a motivation in their writing subject to produce their writing that express their feelings, engages their imaginations and utilizes their thinking skills. If the students lacked of motivation in writing subject, it is one of the prime sources of low achievement and it has possibility that error will be appear in their writing process.

The errors performed by the students were also caused by several factors which happened in their learning process as the causes of their errors; one of factors is interlingual transfer. The different systems of both target language (English) and source language (mother tongue) were the main factor of the existence of errors in their construction a descriptive text. Many students generated the system of English language with their native language, Indonesia language. The students used Indonesian system of language to construct English sentences in their descriptive text writing. The writer analyzed the source of error through the result of the interview. Students who performed errors because of this source generally brought their native

language behavior. For example, when the student wanted to write Indonesian sentence "*Aku mempunyai keluarga yang harmonis*"; they constructed English sentence "*I have family harmonious*" (Ss 2). That error was because of the students lacked of knowledge about English. They translated directly their mother tongue into English. Consequently, the sentence was grammatically incorrect because the student makes incorrect word order.

The other factor that influences the learner's error is intralingual transfer. According to Richards (1984: 6), intralingual interference refers to items produced by the learner which do not reflect the structure of mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. In her research, the writer found many facts that students made errors from this factor. For example: "*My family members is four persons*" (Ss 5). This incorrect form of to be was included into intralingual source of errors because the student ignored the restrictions of the use of to be auxiliary for plural subjects. She picked to be auxiliary without considering the correct use of it.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are several factors coming from students' native language and target language system which can causes learners' errors. If errors are caused by the interference of native, they are included into interlingual errors. Furthermore, if existing errors are caused by the students' generalization of target language system, they are included into intralingual interference. Thus, what the writer found from her research about source of errors was actually proposed by Richards in his theory.

In conclusion, errors cannot be separated from language learning due to their significance. According to Richards (1984: 25), every learner's error provides

evidence of the system of the language that he is using. It means that by analyzing errors, the teachers will know the development of language learning. This is because the teacher can see to what extent their students receive their explanation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the analysis, it can be concluded that the type of errors made by 32 junior high school students of SMP N 1 Mojolaban in writing a descriptive text based on surface strategy are classified into errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misformation, and errors of misordering. The writer found 430 total errors consisting of 161 or 37.44% errors of omission, 97 or 22.56% errors of addition, 155 or 36.05% errors of misformation and 17 or 3.95% errors of misordering. From the data above, it can be seen that omission error is the most frequent errors made by the students. It is followed by misformation error, addition error and the last as the lowest frequency is misordering error.

Errors of omission are classified into 11 sub-types of errors i.e. omission of article, head noun, possessive, plural form, letter, *to be* auxiliary, word, modifier, punctuation, preposition, and regularization. In this type, many students made errors in omission of letter with 43 errors or 10% of 430 total errors. Addition errors consist of addition of plural form, preposition, *to be* auxiliary, article, verb auxiliary (*has, have*), letter, pronoun, noun, conjunction, modal auxiliary and possessive case. The highest percentage is of addition errors of letter with 22 errors or 5.12% of 430 total errors. Furthermore, errors of misformation are classified into 12 sub-types e.g. misformation of *to be* auxiliary, noun, verb, verb auxiliary (*have, has*), adjective, letter, subject pronoun, possessive case, preposition, phrase, conjunction and word.

The highest percentage is error in misformation of letter/mis spelling with 25 errors or 5.81% of 430 total errors. Meanwhile, errors of misordering are categorized into four sub-types: misordering of head noun, misordering of *to be* auxiliary, misordering of possessive adjective, and misordering of adverb. From the four sub-types of misordering error above, most students made errors in misordering of head noun with 12 errors or 2.79% of 430 total errors.

The errors made by the eighth grade students of SMP N 1 Mojolaban were caused by some factors, namely: (1) Interlingual transfer which is caused by the interference of their mother tongue with 96 errors or 22.32% of all errors, (2) Intralingual transfer which is a negative transfer within the target of language (English) with 331 errors or 76.98% of all errors, and (3) The context of learning that deals with the teacher and the material of teaching and learning process with 3 errors or 0.7% of all errors.

SUGGESTION

The researcher would like to propose some suggestions for the teacher of SMP N 1 Mojolaban, the students of SMP N 1 Mojolaban, and other researches. For the teacher of SMP N 1 Mojolaban, the writer suggest that the teacher should pay attention to all errors made by the students, but they expected to emphasize properly in giving extra explanation and exercise on errors which mostly occur. They should give clear explanation about English structure and grammar that can easily understood by the student. For the students of SMP N 1 Mojolaban, the writer suggests that they need to improve their competence in writing. Besides, they should be aware of their errors and try to overcome their problems in studying English, especially in

writing. For other researcher, the writer suggests to find an appropriate solution that can be used to minimized or reduce students' error. Besides, they can discuss and analyze the learners' error deeply in the aspects of linguistic category, comparative taxonomy or communicative effect taxonomy.

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